

## European education corridors: opportunity for academic solidarity

In times of growing political tensions around migration, health-care providers can help to protect migrant populations from exclusion.<sup>1,2</sup> The UCL–Lancet Commission on Migration and Health called for a strengthening, through regulatory and training bodies, of health professionals' and organisations' awareness of discrimination.<sup>2</sup> We add that organisations engaged in health science and biomedical education can fulfil their moral and deontological duty to protect populations that are susceptible to discrimination by also promoting the right to education.

States must make education available and accessible to all, regardless of migration status,<sup>3</sup> but approximately

37 million children of primary and lower-secondary age are out of school in crisis-affected countries.<sup>3</sup> More and more young adults who are stranded in war-torn areas or along migration paths cannot start or complete university studies. All of these young people have the right to an education itinerary that fits their capacities and preferences for personal development. Their communities will reap the benefits of their education. The European Parliament Resolution 2015/2977 on education for children in emergency situations and protracted crises requires EU and humanitarian agencies to include education and protection of children in emergency responses, and explicitly calls "to establish education corridors to ensure that students from countries in conflict, in particular Syria, Iraq, and Eritrea, are accepted in universities".<sup>4</sup> In line with UN High Commissioner for Refugees advocacy on tertiary education and Sustainable Development Goal 4,<sup>5</sup> European teaching institutions, including medical and biomedical schools, should develop innovative collaborative models on the basis of the principles of cooperation and solidarity.

During the last 3 academic years, the Università del Piemonte Orientale (UPO) has run a pilot education corridor programme for Syrian undergraduate and graduate students in the biomedical field (ie, medicine, medical biotechnologies, and biology), in partnership with the Deir Mar Musa Community in Syria and the Jesuit Refugee Service. Students enrolled in regular biomedical and medical courses are fully hosted by UPO with the additional financial help of other agencies, and are also integrated into formal and informal community networks, which proved very helpful for facilitating cultural and linguistic integration. Because the students reach UPO with a student visa, and not as refugees, they can later return to their country to share biomedical skills and knowledge with their communities. Given the positive outcomes in the first

3 years, UPO has now integrated this initiative into its strategic plan.

This pilot experience suggests that welcoming, integrating, and supporting students from conflict areas, with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds is feasible and rewarding for all the involved stakeholders. The pilot also provides an important testimony of the role of the university as a key societal actor to promote human rights values and global solidarity.

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